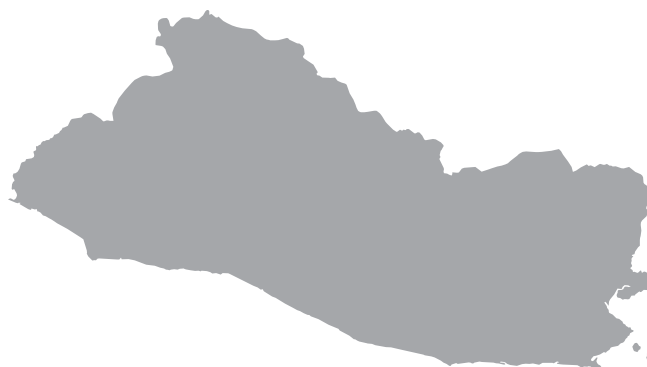


In 2017, El Salvador made a moderate advancement in efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labor. The Labor Inspection Directorate changed inspectors' daily inspections schedules in the agricultural sector to begin earlier in the morning to better verify possible child labor situations and included child labor specific items in interview checklists. In addition, the National Council for Children and Adolescents released a protocol to implement the National Policy for the Protection of Children and Adolescents. However, children in El Salvador engage in the worst forms of child labor, including in illicit activities, sometimes as a result of human trafficking.

Children also perform dangerous tasks in the harvesting of sugarcane. Law enforcement agencies continue to lack sufficient resources to fully enforce child labor laws, and no penalties for child labor violations were issued in 2017.



### I. PREVALENCE AND SECTORAL DISTRIBUTION OF CHILD LABOR

Children in El Salvador engage in the worst forms of child labor, including in illicit activities, sometimes as a result of human trafficking. Children also perform dangerous tasks in the harvesting of sugarcane. (1; 2; 3; 4; 5; 6) Table 1 provides key indicators on children's work and education in El Salvador.

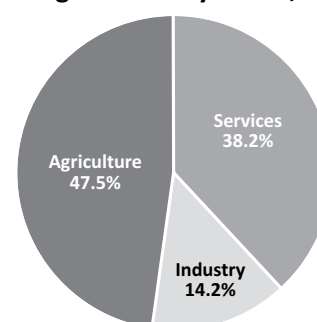
**Table 1. Statistics on Children's Work and Education**

Children	Age	Percent
Working (% and population)	5 to 14	5.9 (68,431)
Attending School (%)	5 to 14	92.3
Combining Work and School (%)	7 to 14	6.1
Primary Completion Rate (%)		93.4

Source for primary completion rate: Data from 2016, published by UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2018. (7)

Source for all other data: Understanding Children's Work Project's analysis of statistics from Encuesta de Hogares de Propósitos Múltiples (EHPM), 2015. (8)

**Figure 1. Working Children by Sector, Ages 5-14**



Based on a review of available information, Table 2 provides an overview of children's work by sector and activity.

**Table 2. Overview of Children's Work by Sector and Activity**

Sector/Industry	Activity
Agriculture	Harvesting sugarcane† and coffee,† and production of cereal grains (2; 3; 9; 10; 11; 12)
	Cattle-raising† (12)
	Fishing,† including harvesting shellfish and mollusks† (2; 3; 4; 10; 13; 14)
Industry	Manufacturing fireworks† (2; 3; 11; 15; 14)
	Production of baked goods (12)
	Construction† (2; 10; 12; 16)
Services	Garbage scavenging† and street begging,† performing,† and vending† (2; 3; 11; 17)
	Domestic work (2; 3; 11; 12; 18; 19)
	Selling goods in markets or kiosks and working in restaurants (12)
	Repairing motor vehicles† (12; 16; 20)
Categorical Worst Forms of Child Labor‡	Commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking (2; 14; 6)
	Use by gangs to perform illicit activities, including committing homicides, extortion, and trafficking drugs, sometimes as a result of human trafficking (4; 21; 14; 6)
	Forced begging, domestic work, and street work (2; 4; 6)

† Determined by national law or regulation as hazardous and, as such, relevant to Article 3(d) of ILO C. 182.

‡ Child labor understood as the worst forms of child labor *per se* under Article 3(a)–(c) of ILO C. 182.

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Children in El Salvador often lack economic and educational opportunities and are vulnerable to the worst forms of child labor, including commercial sexual exploitation and recruitment by gangs for illicit activities, such as committing homicides and trafficking drugs. (22; 23; 24) Children often emigrate to escape violence, extortion, and forced recruitment by gangs, in addition to seeking economic opportunities and family reunification. Once en route, they become vulnerable to human trafficking and commercial sexual exploitation. (4; 22; 23; 24; 27)




Child labor in El Salvador is predominantly male, with boys comprising approximately two-thirds of child laborers ages 5 to 17. (12; 28; 29; 30) However, girls comprise the majority of children engaged in domestic work in third-party homes. (2; 12; 18) At schools, children are recruited and harassed by gangs, which may cause children to stop attending school. Children who do not attend school are also more vulnerable to child labor, including its worst forms. (4; 5; 27; 31; 32; 33; 34; 35) Although government programs have expanded basic education coverage, gang violence, including the extortion of school children, has hindered efforts to increase school enrollment and decrease dropout rates. (34; 35; 36; 37) The Educated El Salvador Plan created 7 online study programs and outlined additional government efforts to address this problem. (35; 38; 39)

Multiple reports, including by a third-party monitoring group, indicate that the use of child labor in sugarcane harvesting has declined since 2010. (9; 40; 41) The latest government figures, taken by the Ministry of Education in 2015, counted 934 persons under age 18 engaged in the production of sugarcane. (42) The published report of the 2016 Multipurpose Household Survey does not contain information on the number of children working in the sugarcane sector or on the number of children engaged in the worst forms of child labor, including in illicit activities. (19; 14)

## II. LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR CHILD LABOR

El Salvador has ratified all key international conventions concerning child labor (Table 3).

**Table 3. Ratification of International Conventions on Child Labor**

Convention	Ratification
 ILO C. 138, Minimum Age	✓
ILO C. 182, Worst Forms of Child Labor	✓
 UN CRC	✓
UN CRC Optional Protocol on Armed Conflict	✓
UN CRC Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography	✓
 Palermo Protocol on Trafficking in Persons	✓

The government's laws and regulations are in line with relevant international standards (Table 4).

**Table 4. Laws and Regulations on Child Labor**

Standard	Meets International Standards: Yes/No	Age	Legislation
Minimum Age for Work	Yes	14	Article 114 of the Labor Code; Article 38 of the Constitution; Article 59 of the Law for the Comprehensive Protection of Children and Adolescents (LEPINA) (43; 44; 45)
Minimum Age for Hazardous Work	Yes	18	Article 105 of the Labor Code; Article 38 of the Constitution; Article 2 of Agreement 241 of 2011 (43; 44; 46)
Identification of Hazardous Occupations or Activities Prohibited for Children	Yes		Article 1 of Agreement 241 of 2011 (46)
Prohibition of Forced Labor	Yes		Articles 3 and 54–55 of the Special Law Against Trafficking in Persons; Article 13 of the Labor Code; Article 56 of LEPINA; Articles 4 and 9 of the Constitution (43; 44; 45; 47)

**Table 4. Laws and Regulations on Child Labor (cont)**

Standard	Meets International Standards: Yes/No	Age	Legislation
Prohibition of Child Trafficking	Yes		Articles 3 and 54–55 of the Special Law Against Trafficking in Persons; Article 56 of LEPINA (45; 47)
Prohibition of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children	Yes		Articles 3 and 54–55 of the Special Law Against Trafficking in Persons; Articles 169–173 of the Penal Code; Article 55 of LEPINA (45; 47; 48)
Prohibition of Using Children in Illicit Activities	Yes		Articles 3 and 54–55 of the Special Law Against Trafficking in Persons; Articles 214 and 345 of the Penal Code; Article 56 of LEPINA (45; 47; 48)
Prohibition of Military Recruitment			
State Compulsory	Yes	18	Article 215 of the Constitution (43)
State Voluntary	Yes	16	Articles 2 and 6 of the Military Service Law (49)
Non-state	Yes		Article 345 of the Penal Code; Article 1 of the Law Prohibiting Gangs and Criminal Organizations; Article 7 of the Constitution (43; 48; 50)
Compulsory Education Age	Yes	18‡	Articles 5, 18, 20, and 22 of the General Education Law; Article 82 of LEPINA; Article 56 of the Constitution (43; 45; 51)
Free Public Education	Yes		Articles 5, 18, 20, and 22 of the General Education Law; Article 82 of LEPINA; Article 56 of the Constitution (43; 45; 51)

‡ Age calculated based on available information (45; 51)

### III. ENFORCEMENT OF LAWS ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established institutional mechanisms for the enforcement of laws and regulations on child labor (Table 5). However, gaps exist within the Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare's operations that hinder adequate child labor enforcement.

**Table 5. Agencies Responsible for Child Labor Law Enforcement**

Organization/Agency	Role
Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare (MTPS)	Inspect registered businesses for labor violations, including child labor. (10; 20; 14) Maintain a child labor unit dedicated to child labor law enforcement issues. (52) Refer cases of alleged crimes of the worst forms of child labor to the Office of the Attorney General. (10)
Office of the Attorney General (AG)	Enforce criminal laws related to the worst forms of child labor. Maintain the AG's Special Unit on Trafficking in Persons and Related Crimes that consists of 12 prosecutors who investigate human trafficking and related crimes. (5; 10; 11; 47) Refer exploited children to the Salvadoran Institute for the Comprehensive Development of Children and Adolescents (ISNA) for social services. (10)
National Civilian Police (PNC)	Enforce criminal laws related to the worst forms of child labor. Maintain the PNC's Special Unit on Trafficking in Persons and Related Crimes that investigates cases of human trafficking, including child trafficking. (10; 20; 47; 14) Maintain a hotline that receives complaints about human trafficking for sexual and labor exploitation. (53)
Salvadoran Institute for the Comprehensive Development of Children and Adolescents (ISNA)	Receive referrals from law enforcement agencies on cases of criminal exploitation of children, including for forced labor, human trafficking, and commercial sexual exploitation. Provide child victims with services, including shelter, medical attention, psychological help, and legal advice. (54)

#### *Labor Law Enforcement*

In 2017, labor law enforcement agencies in El Salvador took actions to combat child labor (Table 6). However, gaps exist within the operations of the Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare that may hinder adequate labor law enforcement, including financial resource allocation.

**Table 6. Labor Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor**

Overview of Labor Law Enforcement	2016	2017
Labor Inspectorate Funding	\$1,912,214 (5)	\$1,696,239 (14)
Number of Labor Inspectors	183 (5)	181 (14)
Inspectorate Authorized to Assess Penalties	Yes (5)	Yes (14)
Training for Labor Inspectors		

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**Table 6. Labor Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor (cont)**

Overview of Labor Law Enforcement	2016	2017
Initial Training for New Employees	N/A	N/A
Training on New Laws Related to Child Labor	N/A	N/A
Refresher Courses Provided	Yes (5)	Yes (14)
Number of Labor Inspections Conducted	28,446 (55)	31,337 (56)
Number Conducted at Worksites	28,446 (55)	31,337 (56)
Number of Child Labor Violations Found	8 (5)	2 (14)
Number of Child Labor Violations for Which Penalties were Imposed	0 (5)	0 (14)
Number of Child Labor Penalties Imposed that were Collected	0 (5)	0 (14)
Routine Inspections Conducted	Yes (5)	Yes (14)
Routine Inspections Targeted	Unknown* (5)	Yes (14)
Unannounced Inspections Permitted	Yes (5)	Yes (14)
Unannounced Inspections Conducted	Yes (5)	Yes (14)
Complaint Mechanism Exists	Yes (5)	Yes (14)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Labor Authorities and Social Services	Yes (5)	Yes (14)

\* The government does not publish this information.

In 2017, the Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare (MTPS) reported that its level of funding was inadequate and hampered the labor inspectorate's capacity to enforce child labor laws. The Labor Inspection Directorate changed inspectors' daily inspections schedules in the agricultural sector to begin earlier in the morning to better verify possible child labor situations and included child labor specific items in interview checklists. (14)

In 2017, the MTPS reported that it conducted 961 child labor-specific inspections across all 14 of El Salvador's administrative regions, including some targeted inspections in the sugarcane and coffee sectors. (57) As of October 2017, the MTPS reported that inspections found 2 child labor violations. (14) No fines were collected, as MTPS reported all child labor issues were resolved upon re-inspection. (14)

The government reports that the Labor Committee of the Legislative Assembly is drafting an updated Labor Procedures Code, which will include provisions to streamline the issuance of penalties. (58; 59) The Salvadoran Institute for the Comprehensive Development of Children and Adolescents (ISNA) reported that in 2017 it assisted 14 children engaged in child labor, including 1 child engaged in dangerous work. (60)

Article 627 of the Labor Code specifies a default fine of no more than \$60 per violation of all labor laws, including child labor laws. (44) Reports indicate that this amount is insufficient to deter labor violations. (5) The government is currently reviewing national legislation to ensure that monetary penalties for all labor violations are proportionate to the nature of the offense. (58; 59; 61)

### *Criminal Law Enforcement*

In 2017, criminal law enforcement agencies in El Salvador took actions to combat child labor (Table 7). However, gaps exist within the operations of criminal enforcement agencies that may hinder adequate criminal law enforcement, including financial resources.

**Table 7. Criminal Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor**

Overview of Criminal Law Enforcement	2016	2017
Training for Investigators		
Initial Training for New Employees	Unknown	Unknown
Training on New Laws Related to the Worst Forms of Child Labor	Yes (5)	Yes (14)
Refresher Courses Provided	Yes (5)	Yes (14)
Number of Investigations	26 (5)	19 (14)
Number of Violations Found	35 (5)	77 (14)

**Table 7. Criminal Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor (cont)**

Overview of Criminal Law Enforcement	2016	2017
Number of Prosecutions Initiated	Unknown	9 (14)
Number of Convictions	6 (5)	0 (14)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Criminal Authorities and Social Services	Yes (5)	Yes (14)

In 2017, the Office of the Attorney General (AG) provided training for investigators on the INTERPOL child sexual abuse database, conducted a regional workshop for combating child sexual abuse—an advanced regional workshop to combat child sexual abuse—and a regional workshop on coordination and investigation of online child sexual exploitation. The National Council for Children and Adolescents (CONNA) conducted trainings for 8,500 people on the Special Law for Comprehensive Protection of Children and Adolescents (LEPINA), and the guidelines for the National Protection Plan for Children and Adolescents. CONNA also conducted training for 25 sexual exploitation prevention specialists. (14; 62)

In 2017, the AG’s Trafficking in Persons Unit encountered 21 victims of child trafficking for sexual exploitation. This included 7 cases of child prostitution affecting 8 victims, 10 cases of pornography involving 11 victims, and 10 cases of payment for sexual acts with 11 victims. (14)

The AG reported that it lacks sufficient financial resources to maintain the level of staffing, training, and transportation required to meet its obligation to prosecute crimes, including the worst forms of child labor. (63; 14; 62) In addition, reports indicate that increased coordination between the PNC and the AG is needed to improve the investigation and prosecution of criminal child labor violations. (58)

#### IV. COORDINATION OF GOVERNMENT EFFORTS ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established mechanisms to coordinate its efforts to address child labor (Table 8).

**Table 8. Key Mechanisms to Coordinate Government Efforts on Child Labor**

Coordinating Body	Role and Description
National Committee for the Eradication of Child Labor (CNETI)	Determine and implement government efforts to combat child labor, including the Roadmap to Make El Salvador a Country Free of Child Labor and its Worst Forms. Chaired by the MTPS, includes 12 government agencies, along with representatives from labor unions, business associations, and NGOs. (2; 12; 20; 64; 14) Maintain a web-based monitoring system that allows government agencies to share and analyze information to coordinate the implementation of the Roadmap. (65; 66; 67; 14)
National Council Against Trafficking in Persons	Coordinate government efforts to combat human trafficking and implement the National Policy Against Trafficking in Persons. (68; 14) Led by the Ministry of Justice and Public Security and composed of 11 government agencies. (1; 47; 69; 14)
National Council for Children and Adolescents (CONNA)	Develop policies to protect the rights of children, including those regarding child labor, and implement LEPINA and the National Policy for the Protection of Children and Adolescents (PNPNA). (45; 70; 71; 14) Composed of Departmental and Local Committees for Children’s and Adolescents’ Rights, ISNA, the Ministry of Public Security and Justice, the AG, the Human Rights Ombudsman, and other agencies. (14) In 2017, CONNA expanded its response network and youth protection programs, and enacted rules to coordinate protection programs for children and adolescents. (72; 14)
Departmental and Local Committees for Children’s and Adolescents’ Rights	Implement CONNA’s policies, including the PNPNA, at the departmental and municipal levels, as well as receive complaints of child rights violations at the departmental level. (45; 73; 74; 75; 14)

All coordinating bodies appeared to be active during the reporting period. (62)

#### V. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established policies related to child labor (Table 9). However, policy gaps exist that hinder efforts to address child labor, including with mainstreaming child labor issues into relevant policies.

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**Table 9. Key Policies Related to Child Labor‡**

Policy	Description
Roadmap to Make El Salvador a Country Free of Child Labor and its Worst Forms	Serves as the government’s principal policy for eliminating the worst forms of child labor. Aims to eliminate all child labor by 2020, including by reducing poverty, improving education and health, protecting children’s rights, and raising awareness on child labor. (1; 12; 76; 77; 58)
National Policy for the Protection of Children and Adolescents (PNPNA) (2013–2023)	Sets government policies aimed at guaranteeing children’s rights and protecting them from violence and harm, including the worst forms of child labor. Other objectives include improving health services and access to quality education for children, including children with disabilities, and reducing poverty. (12; 71)
National Action Plan for the PNPNA (2014–2017)	Sets a framework for implementing the PNPNA from 2014–2017. Aimed to address PNPNA objectives, including the prevention of violence, the promotion of access to quality education, and the elimination of child labor by focusing on children’s and adolescents’ rights, gender equality, and social inclusion. (12; 78; 79)
National Policy Against Trafficking in Persons	Defines a comprehensive plan to combat human trafficking of adults and children for labor and commercial sexual exploitation. Aims to improve prevention efforts, victim assistance, prosecution, interagency coordination, training, and anti-corruption efforts. (1; 80; 81)
Educated El Salvador Plan†	Outlines six priorities for improving El Salvador’s national education system, including increasing security in schools and improving access to education for vulnerable groups, including children engaged in child labor. (35; 14) In 2017, policy efforts led to better trained teachers, seven online study programs added, and with the help of foreign assistance, the reconstruction of several schools. (14; 37)
Alliance for Prosperity in the Northern Triangle	Aims to create economic growth, increase educational and vocational training opportunities for youth, and reduce violence in Honduras, Guatemala, and El Salvador. Seeks to do this, in part, to reduce the number of unaccompanied minors who leave El Salvador, as well as Honduras and Guatemala, for the United States and who are vulnerable to human trafficking. Signed by the presidents of each country in 2014. (82; 83; 84)

† Policy was approved during the reporting period.

‡ The government had other policies that may have addressed child labor issues or had an impact on child labor. (5; 85; 86; 87; 88; 89; 90; 91; 62)

The government has not incorporated child labor elimination and prevention strategies into the National Youth Policy (2010–2024). (92)

## VI. SOCIAL PROGRAMS TO ADDRESS CHILD LABOR

In 2017, the government funded and participated in programs that include the goal of eliminating or preventing child labor (Table 10). However, gaps exist in these social programs, including the adequacy of programs to address the problem in all sectors.

**Table 10. Key Social Programs to Address Child Labor‡**

Program	Description
USDOL-funded Projects	Projects which aim to reduce the incidence of child labor, including: Youth Pathways–Central America (2015–2019), \$16.5 million project implemented by Catholic Relief Services in El Salvador and Honduras; Global Research on Child Labor Measurement and Policy Development (2013–2018), \$7 million project implemented by the ILO in 10 countries; and Reducing Incidence of Child Labor and Harmful Conditions of Work in Economic Strengthening Initiatives (RICHERS) (2017–2021), \$1.5 million project implemented by the Grameen Foundation in El Salvador and the Philippines. (93; 94; 95) More information is available on the USDOL website.
Public Awareness Campaigns†	Government public-awareness campaigns implemented by CONNA and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to raise awareness about the dangers of human trafficking. Includes CONNA’s “Don’t Risk Your Lives” campaign, supported by UNICEF and IOM. (58; 59; 60) In 2017, CONNA announced the second phase of its “Protection Starts at Home” and “Talk to Me” awareness programs, which promote respect towards the physical, psychological, and sexual integrity of children and adolescents. (14; 60)
Public Awareness Campaigns on Child Labor†	Government public-awareness campaigns implemented by the Ministry of Education (MINED), the MTPS, the Ministry of Health, and CONNA to inform children about the dangers of child labor, including manufacturing and handling fireworks. (96; 63; 97; 98) Produced radio skits, print ads, and technical assistance information in 2017 in coordination with the ILO and FUNDAZUCAR, the social responsibility arm of the Association of Salvadoran Sugar Producers. (62)
Sustainable Families Programs*†	Set of existing and new government programs focused on improving health, education, productivity, security, and eliminating poverty through inclusive and sustainable economic growth and public services. Includes Health and Education Bonus Programs that assist families with cash transfers conditioned on children’s school attendance and health checkups. (99; 100; 1)

**Table 10. Key Social Programs to Address Child Labor‡ (cont)**

Program	Description
Solidarity Communities Programs†	Government programs that aimed to reduce social exclusion and boost household income by increasing access to public services and building human capital that ended in 2017. Included cash transfers conditioned on children's school attendance and health checkups and the Temporary Income Support Program (PATI) that provided financial support and vocational training to beneficiaries ages 16 and older. (1; 101)
School Prevention and Security Plan†	Programs implemented by MINED, the Ministry of Justice and Public Security, and the PNC in schools with high levels of violence. Includes activities such as provision of psychological help, online classes, skills workshops for youth, and increased police patrols. (102; 103) Expanded in 2017 to operate in approximately 1,250 schools. (36; 104)

\* Program was launched during the reporting period.

† Program is funded by the Government of El Salvador.

‡ The government had other social programs that may have included the goal of eliminating or preventing child labor. (11; 89; 105; 106; 107; 108; 109)

The government joined UNODC's Blue Heart Campaign to raise awareness against trafficking in persons. (109; 14) During the year, MTPS also increased the number of micro-enterprise advisers from 1 to 15 through the country's provinces, enabling the Ministry to provide additional services for entrepreneurs, including youth. (110) The government implements several programs to reduce the worst forms of child labor by assisting poor families and school children; however, research found no evidence that the government has programs that assist child laborers who may not be living with their families and not attending school, such as children engaged in domestic work. Research could not determine whether the government's efforts to prevent and eliminate child labor in the production of sugarcane addressed the full scope of the problem.

## VII. SUGGESTED GOVERNMENT ACTIONS TO ELIMINATE CHILD LABOR

Based on the reporting above, suggested actions are identified that would advance the elimination of child labor in El Salvador (Table 11).

**Table 11. Suggested Government Actions to Eliminate Child Labor**

Area	Suggested Action	Year(s) Suggested
Enforcement	Provide sufficient funding and resources to the MTPS and criminal law enforcement agencies to fully enforce child labor laws.	2010 – 2017
	Ensure that penalties are imposed and fines are collected for child labor violations.	2015 – 2017
	Establish monetary penalties for child labor violations that are proportionate to the nature and seriousness of the offense.	2009 – 2017
	Improve coordination between the National Civilian Police (PNC) and the Attorney General (AG) in their investigation and prosecution of criminal cases, including by implementing the regulations of the Special Law Against Trafficking in Persons.	2014 – 2017
Government Policies	Integrate child labor elimination and prevention strategies into the National Youth Policy for 2010–2024.	2014 – 2017
Social Programs	Collect and publish government statistics on the number of children engaged in the production of sugarcane.	2016 – 2017
	Conduct a study on the use of children in illicit activities.	2009 – 2017
	Improve children's access to education by ensuring that school children are safe in schools.	2011 – 2017
	Implement programs to address child labor in domestic work and ensure programs to combat child labor in the production of sugarcane are sufficient to address the scope of the problem.	2017

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